

**PICA Grant Summary for the
2013 Marianas Avifauna Conservation Program**

By Jennifer Pribble

Between April 26th and May 10th, I went to the island of Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Marianas Islands (CNMI). The primary goal of this trip was to assist the Marianas Avifauna Conservation (MAC) Program with the capture/translocation of 25 Mariana fruit doves and 32 Rufous fantails from Saipan to Sarigan. Sarigan, the destination site chosen by CNMI DFW biologists for this species, is a snake-free, human-free managed reserve island. The main reason that these birds are being relocated is to set up back up populations of endemic birds on islands that are uninhabited and do not face the risk of predation from feral cats and the brown tree snake. The brown tree snake decimated the bird population on the island of Guam and this program is a preventative measure to ensure that these bird species do not face the same long-term fate. The birds were captured by strategically placing mist nets. A total of 8 days were spent watching these mist nets every 15-20min 11 hours a day and removing any birds that may have been trapped in them. There were a number of non-target species that are captured in the process and these birds are immediately released. Target species are bagged and labeled for the time and site that they were captured and taken back to the hotel to be housed until they are released on the new island. I got a lot of experience of removing birds from these mist nets. Previous to this trip I have very limited experience in using mist nets to assist in bird capture. Another aspect of trapping birds on remote islands is trying to have enough food for them. The Rufous Fantails are a type of flycatcher that only eats live insects. Flycatchers can be notoriously difficult to keep in captivity for any length of time because of territorial social structures and reliance on flying prey in the wild. While there has been some limited success in holding and breeding these birds, translocations have not been attempted. A large part of our time when we were not in the field was collecting food for the fantails. I gained the title of the fly king while in Saipan because I played a large part in building the traps and managing them so that there were plenty of flies. There were a total of 9 zoos that sent participants in the 2013 project. I met many new people and developed

working relationships with them that I see will be beneficial in the long term. There are discussions that we may create an exhibit that would be dedicated to CNMI birds and try to get the Birmingham Zoo more involved in the captive breeding programs for these species.